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PROGRAM Morning Edition

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CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT John Horton

BOB EDWARDS: The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence wants to question CIA Director William Casey. Specifically, they want to ask him about charges made by a former CIA intelligence analyst who says the Director pressured him to change an intelligence report on Mexico. When he refused, Casey had the report rewritten, and the analyst resigned.

NPR's Bill Buzenberg has more on the story.

BILL BUZENBERG: The CIA analyst in this story is John Horton. Until he quit last May, Mr. Horton was the CIA's national intelligence officer in charge of Latin America, a senior post reflecting his 27 years with the agency.

This story is not that Mr. Horton disagrees with Reagan Administration policy on Central America. He supports it. What he objects to and the reason why he resigned goes to the heart of what American intelligence analysis is supposed to provide --namely, neutral information and analysis for policymakers that is arrived at free from political interference.

Mr. Horton charges that CIA Director Casey pressured him constantly to jigger intelligence estimates to support Administration policy. Specifically, he says, Casey wanted a tougher report on internal threats to stability in Mexico, so that it would strengthen the case for a covert program of American pressure against Mexico to support U.S. policy in Central America. Mr. Horton refused to alter the disputed intelligence report because, he says, the data did not support Casey's more alarmist conclusions. "I refused to do it," Horton said in one of his few press interviews, "so Casey finally had the thing rewritten over my dead body, so to speak." At that point, Horton

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resigned.

He said he didn't think political pressure was widespread in the CIA, but added, "When the Administration has a very strong ideological feeling about one policy, you have this tension."

When asked about Mr. Horton's charges, a CIA spokesperson said, generally, there is a lot of give-and-take in the intelligence estimates process. There are often disagreements of what weight to give certain facts and what judgments should be reached.

Congressional sources say it's unclear if this is a serious case of CIA politicization. Senate Minority Leader Robert Byrd, in a letter to the Intelligence Committee, asked for an investigation of Horton's charges. "If accurate," Byrd's letter says, "these reports indicate there has been a shocking misuse of the CIA for political purposes." Byrd wrote that "if Congress cannot rely on the untarnished accuracy of the CIA's intelligence reports, then it calls into question the factual basis for virtually every foreign policy decision by the Administration."

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Intelligence Committee, Senators Goldwater and Moynihan, have asked Casey to meet with them to explain what happened. Closed hearings could be held, depending on Casey's answers.

Congress is perhaps more interested in Horton's charges than it might otherwise be because it's the second time this year a former CIA official has gone public with charges of political tampering.

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